

## CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

## INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Indochina

SUBJECT Viet Minh Road Systems in North Indochina

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1. Throughout 1953, the major efforts of the Viet Minh (VM) mobilized civilian labor (dan cong) has consisted of the following:

a. The construction and repair of roads.

b. The construction of temporary and principal depots and the dispatching of materiel to these depots:

(1) Arms and munitions received from the Chinese were transported from Lang Son and Cao Bang to the northwest and the southwest region of North Vietnam.

(2) Rice and salt from Interzone IV and the Delta was transported to the north.

c. Establishment and organization of fifth column nets and guerrilla groups in High and Middle Laos.

2. There are three main road systems in the VM zones:

a. In the northeast, the principal road for forwarding Chinese aid is via Lang Son towards Tuyen Quang and Yen Bay. The principal depots are scattered along this route which is protected by heavy emplacements of anti-aircraft and by a permanent reserve team of dan cong of 10,000 to 15,000 men who repair the routes in case of aerial bombardment.<sup>1</sup> This system includes Colonial Route 1, La Rocade (Strategic Road) and Provincial Route 13.

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- b. In the west, there is only one system of communications between the Viet Bac and Thailand, and between the Viet Bac, Interzone IV and the Delta. During the last eight or ten months, this road system has been the object of intense activity of the dan cong and even of regular units. This road system consists of the following: Provincial Route 41, National Route 2, the route from Thanh Son, Provincial Route 24, the recently completed route from Yen Bay to Conoi (approximately N 21-10, E 104-03).
  - c. In the southwest, the transportation system consists of Provincial Route 41 and Provincial Route 12. The Ma River is also used. This road system connects Interzone IV and the southwest edge of the Delta with Yen Bay or with Thai country. Paddy and salt are transported over this route by the dan cong.
  - d. In the north and northwest, there are two secondary road systems. The northern one goes from Trung Khanh Phu (N 22-50, E 106-32) via Provincial Route 141 or another road to Cao Bang and then follows National Route 3 or 3a, National Route 4 and Provincial Route 27. This route has not been used very much as most Chinese aid is transported over the Nam Ninh - Lang Son route. In the northwest, the secondary road system consists of National Route 4 from Lao Kay and National Route 2 from Ha Giang. Although these roads are not used very much, they are in good condition and can be used if needed.
3. The VM command at present has 600 to 800 transport trucks, Molotova or GMC, furnished by the Chinese. These trucks are principally used in the north and west, and transportation in the southwest is done principally with carts, carriages, bicycles and men.
  4. The effect of aerial bombardment by the French is important, but has not stopped the movement of trucks or of the dan cong. Protective measures adopted by the VM are as follows:
    - a. Anti-aircraft guns have been set up, principally along Colonial Route 1, at the principal relay stations at the crossroads south of Tuyen Quang, in the region of Phu No Quan and Tach Yen, and along Provincial Route 41, the route from Yen Bay to Conoi and in the sector south of Dien Bien Phu. VM anti-aircraft units, which were previously not effective, are acquiring more and more experience and are becoming more efficient.
    - b. Movements take place at night and various methods of conventional camouflage are used to conceal the movements.
    - c. Reserves of dan cong are kept available for immediate repairs and roads are usually obstructed for only two or three days.
  1.  In the movement of the VM troops during the preceding months, the presence of one or two regular divisions has been noted in this zone.

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